

Message Text

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O P 161850Z MAY 78 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8469
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AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
AMCONSUL CAPETOWN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 6106

EXDIS

STATE PASS WHITE HOUSE

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK, US
SUBJECT: GARBA RIDES AGAIN: ZIMBABWE PLOT THICKENS

SUMMARY: GARBA HAD INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS TWO DAYS AGO IN LONDON WITH SITHOLE, NKOMO AND KAUNDA. SITHOLE THINKS THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED CANNOT SUCCEED. HE COULD WORK WITH NKOMO. NKOMO SAYS HE COULD WORK WITH SITHOLE, BUT MUST AWAIT THE RIGHT MOMENT. SITHOLE APPEARED TO ACCEPT GARBA'S EXPLANATION OF THE UTILITY OF THE UN ROLE AS PROPOSED IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN. SITHOLE IS INTERESTED IN AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING AND WILL TRY TO PERSUADE HIS INTERNAL SETTLEMENT COLLEAGUES TO SUPPORT IT. KAUNDA ASKED GARBA TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT
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PRIOR TO HIS MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE MAY 17, PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE WERE INFORMED OF GARBA'S MEETINGS IN LONDON. GARBA URGES THAT WE MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH SITHOLE. END SUMMARY

1. ON INSTRUCTION FROM GARBA, HIS PERSONAL ASSISTANT BRONSON DEDE READ TO ME THIS AFTERNOON THE BULK OF GARBA'S MEMORANDUM TO OBASANJO ON HIS CONVERSATION IN LONDON, SUNDAY, MAY 14 WITH

SITHOLE, NKOMO, AND KAUNDA. (THE MEETINGS IN LONDON APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN AT GARBA'S INITIATIVE BUT THIS IS FAR FROM CLEAR. DEDE WAS SO BUSY AT THE SAME TIME MONITORING A STEADY STREAM OF AMBASSADORS AND HIGH COMMISSIONERS CALLING ON GARBA THAT I WAS UNABLE TO CROSS-QUESTION HIM AS I WOULD HAVE WISHED.)

2. THE BULK OF THE MEMO DEALT WITH THE CONVERSATION WITH SITHOLE. DEDE PARTICIPATED AND DRAFTED THE MEMO. SITHOLE STARTED OUT WITH A PREDICTABLE AND FAMILIAR DEFENSE OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. SPEAKING, HE SAID, AS A MEMBER OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT, SITHOLE STRESSED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN 13 YEARS THAT SMITH HAD AGREED TO SHARE POWER. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SMITH'S CONCESSION OF A DATE FOR MAJORITY RULE COULD NOT BE IGNORED. SITHOLE SAID THE IMPORTANCE OF SMITH'S ACCEPTANCE OF RHODESIAN FRONT POWER-SHARING WITH THE THREE BLACK LEADERS "CANNOT BE DISMISSED AS A WASHOUT." THE BLACK CO-MINISTER OF DEFENSE, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS ACTUALLY DISCUSSING WITH OTHER RHODESIAN AUTHORITIES THE DIMANTLEMENT OF THE KEEPS" (FORTIFIED HAMLETS). THIS WAS A MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. BRIAN HOVE'S DIFFICULTIES STEMMED NOT FROM THE POSITIONS HE TOOK BUT THE WAY IN WHICH HE PRESENTED THEM. SITHOLE SAID HE AGREED WITH EVERYTHING HOVE HAD SAID. THE TROUBLE WAS THAT HOVE SHOULD HAVE WORKED IT OUT WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RATHER THAN GOING PUBLIC.

3. SITHOLE CITED FOUR CONSIDERATIONS THAT PRODUCED SMITH'S
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CONCESSION OF POWER:

- A. THE PRESSURES OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE,
- B. THE EFFECT OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND THE DETERIORATING STATE OF THE ECONOMY,
- C. THE GROWING EXODUS OF WHITES, AND
- D. THE REALIZATION THAT A GUERRILLA WAR AGAINST THE NATIONALISTS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WON.

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4. ACCORDING TO DEDE, SITHOLE THEN CHANGED GEARS AND LAID OUT FOUR REASONS WHY THE PRESENT INTERNAL SETTLEMENT SITUATION WAS "ARTIFICIAL" AND INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING A PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO MAJORITY RULE:

A. NKOMO'S COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL. ZAPU IS A POLITICAL AND MILITARY REALITY. WITHOUT NKOMO AND ZAPU, THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT WILL FAIL.

B. SMITH'S PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNAL SITUATION IS AN ANOMALY. HE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A PART OF IT, BUT "WE HAD NO ALTERNATIVE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE MORALE OF THE WHITE POPULATION."

C. CHIRAU DOES NOT BELONG IN THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. ZUPO IS "AN ARTIFICIAL CREATION OF SMITH."
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D. EVEN MUZOREWA IS "A MERE CARETAKER." HE IS "POLITICALLY NAIVE AND SHOULD HAVE GONE BACK TO HIS PULPIT."

5. DOUBLE-CHECKING HIS NOTES, DEDE SAID SITHOLE DID NOT ONCE MENTION MUGABE. SITHOLE SAID THAT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WAS A MYTH WHICH HAD NO SIGNIFICANCE INSIDE RHODESIA. ZANU AND ZAPU, ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE CREDIBLE ORGANIZATIONS WITH BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY CLOUT.

6. GARBA THEN PUT THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO SITHOLE. HE ARGUED THAT, WHATEVER THE FRAGILITY OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT UMBRELLA, NKOMO AND MUGABE AS INDIVIDUALS MUST BE RECKONED WITH. AS FOR THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT, WHAT IF SMITH DID NOT KEEP HIS WORD? GARBA RAISED THE QUESTION OF AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE,

INDICATING NIGERIAN SUPPORT OF SUCH A MEETING IN WHICH THE DISCUSSION WOULD BE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN. WHAT DID SITHOLE THINK?

7. SITHOLE CONCEDED THAT NKOMO AND MUGABE COULD NOT BE IGNORED. AS FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF SMITH'S DUPLICITY, SITHOLE SAID HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES "WERE TAKING STEPS TO ASSURE THAT THERE WILL BE A GENERAL UPRISING IF SMITH DECEIVES US." AFTER A LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN AND AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING, SITHOLE SAID HE AGREED THAT THE UK WOULD HAVE TO BE BROUGHT INTO ANY VIABLE SOLUTION FOR RHODESIAN INDEPENDENCE. HE AGREED WITH THE CONCEPT OF A RESIDENT COMMISSIONER IN THIS CONNECTION. HE FURTHER ACCEPTED THE IDEA OF A GOVERNING COUNCIL PROVIDED INTERNAL NATIONALIST LEADERS (HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHICH ONES) WERE GIVEN AN ADEQUATE ROLE ON THE COUNCIL.

8. GARBA THEN PRESSED SITHOLE FOR HIS VIEWS ABOUT AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE. HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED WHETHER SITHOLE WOULD BE WILLING PUBLICLY TO STATE HIS SUPPORT FOR SUCH A MEETING.
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SITHOLE SAID HE HAD TWO PROBLEMS THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE RESOLVED. FIRST, THAT WHITES IN RHODESIA WERE HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS OF ANY UNITED NATIONS ROLE. COULD GARBA EXPLAIN THE PROPOSED ROLE? SECONDLY, HE WOULD WISH TO KNOW WHAT BENEFITS RHODESIAN WHITES MIGHT FORESEE FROM SUCH A CONFERENCE.

9. GARBA EXPLAINED THE PROPOSED ROLE FOR THE UN AS SPECIFIED IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN. GARBA ALSO DESCRIBED THE POSITION TAKEN

ON THIS QUESTION BY THE PATIRO TIC FRONT THEIR MEETINGS IN DAR ES SALAAM WITH SECRETARIES OWEN AND VANCE. SITHOLE THANKED GARBA FOR THE EXPLANATION, "NO ONE HAS PUT THE CASE SO CLEARLY TO ME BEFORE." (DEDE WENT BACK TO HIS DETAILED NOTES TO GIVE ME THIS EXACT WORDING.)

10. IN RESPONSE TO SITHOLE'S SECOND QUESTION, GARBA EXPLAINED THE PROPOSAL FOR THE ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND. IN ADDITION, HE SAID THAT THE UN PRESENCE ASSURED WHITE RHODESIANS OF THEIR OWN SECURITY DURING THE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER.

11. DEDE SAID GARBA AND HE WERE CONVINCED THAT GARBA'S PRESENTATION "WON SITHOLE OVER." GARBA THEN URGED SITHOLE TO MOVE QUICKLY, TELLING HIM HE MUST "DO SOMETHING BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE." SITHOLE SAID HE WOULD CONSULT WITH HIS COLLEAGUES. HE WOULD ENDEAVOR TO CONVINCE THEM OF THE MERITS OF THE ALL-PARTIES MEETING. HE WOULD HOPE THAT HE COULD GET THE ENTIRE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON BOARD. IF HE FAILED, HE WOULD CONSIDER ANNOUNCING HIS OWN SUPPORT FOR SUCH A MEETING.

12. SITHOLE SAID HE "COULD WORK WITH NKOMO." HE COULD NOT SAY SO PUBLICLY AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, NOR WAS HE YET ABLE TO MAKE THE OFFER TO NKOMO DIRECTLY.

13. DEDE SAID GARBA PLAYED THE INTERMEDIARY ROLE ON THIS POINT IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER IN A MEETING WITH NKOMO. NKOMO RESPONDED
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THAT HE SIMILARLY COULD WORK WITH SITHOLE BUT HE "HAD TO WATCH OUT FOR ZANU." HE HAD TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE HIS MOVE.

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14. DEDE THEN TOLD ME THAT NKOMO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SMITH THROUGH DEREK ROBINSON. SMITH WANTED NKOMO TO COME ABOARD.

HE COULD BE A MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO. (I WAS UNABLE TO QUERY DEDE ON WHETHER NKOMO TOLD GARBA THIS OR WHETHER THE NIGERIANS HAD OTHER SOURCES. I WAS SIMILARLY UNABLE TO LEARN NKOMO'S REACTION.)

15. IN A SUBSEQUENT MIDNIGHT MEETING SUNDAY WITH KAUNDA, GARBA RELATED HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH SITHOLE AND NKOMO. (I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER KAUNDA KNEW IN ADVANCE THAT THESE MEETINGS WOULD TAKE PLACE.) KAUNDA ASKED GARBA TO INFORM PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE ABOUT THESE CONVERSATIONS PRIOR TO KAUNDA'S MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT IN WASHINGTON MAY 17. KAUNDA TOLD CONFIDENTIAL

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GARBA THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO INFORM THE BRITISH ABOUT GARBA'S CONVERSATIONS WITH SITHOLE AND NKOMO (REASONS UNCLEAR). GARBA, HOWEVER, INFORMED UK HIGH COMMISSIONER FALLE THIS NOON IN A BRIEF AND GENERAL WAY. I HAVE BRIEFED FALLE ON MY MEETING WITH DEDE AND AGREED THAT HE SHOULD PASS MY BRIEFING TO LONDON, REQUESTING THE FCO TO PROTECT ME AS THE SOURCE.

16. DEDE CLOSED OUR MEETING BY SAYING THAT GARBA URGED THAT STEVE LOW "SHOULD KEEP IN DISCREET CONTACT WITH SITHOLE." (IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT GARBA DID NOT INCLUDE GRAHAM. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER SITHOLE REQUESTED THIS CONTACT OR WHETHER GARBA TOLD SITHOLE HE WOULD URGE IT UPON US.)

17. COMMENT: WHAT SITHOLE DID NOT SAY IS AS REVEALING AS WHAT HE DID SAY. FOR EXAMPLE, HE APPARENTLY DID NOT TRY TO CONVINCE GARBA THAT HE HAD HIS OWN ARMY OR THAT THE NATIONALISTS WERE TURNING IN THEIR ARMS IN RESPONSE TO THE AMNESTY OFFER, NOR DID HE MAINTAIN THAT THE GENERAL POPULATION WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT, NOR DID HE ARGUE THAT ALL THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NEEDED WAS TIME AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING, NOR DID HE PRESENT A PICTURE OF A UNITED AND DETERMINED EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. GARBA'S DEFENSE OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ACCURATE (AS FAR AS IT WENT) AND RESPONSIVE TO SITHOLE'S QUESTIONS ABOUT IT. THE BRIGADIER IMPRESSES US AS SHOOTING FROM THE HIP LESS AS HE LEARNS MORE, AND HE REMAINS CLEARLY ACTIVIST ON OBASANJO'S BEHALF IN SUPPORT OF A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE RHODESIAN PUZZLE. SITHOLE AGREED THAT GARBA PASS THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR CONVERSATION TO WASHINGTON.

18. QUESTION: DOES SITHOLE KNOW OF MUGABE'S REPORTED CONTACT WITH MUZOREWA AND NKOMO'S WITH SMITH, AND IS HIS PITCH TO GARBA THEREFORE PERHAPS MOTIVATED ABOVE ALL BY A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SALVAGE SOMETHING FOR HIMSELF?

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